ROZDZIAŁ 20

Medallic Portraits *à l'antique* of the French Kings before Louis XIV

Agnieszka Fulińska
Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków

The medallic art had been ever since its beginnings in mid-15th century associated with classical antiquity due to the long lasting (i.e. until the 19th century) assumption that ancient coins, in particular those presenting on their obverses the portraits of the Roman emperors,[1] had been if fact commemorative medals rather than money.[2] One of the reasons, attested as late as at the turn of the 18th/19th centuries, was the very fine state of preservation of numerous silver and golden

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1 M. Veillon, *Influences de l'antiquité romaine sur les médailles des rois de France (1450–1589)*, "The Medal" 29 (1996), p. 30, is wrong, however, when she states that these were the only ancient portrait coins: the model thereof had been the Hellenistic royal issues, employing the same iconographic scheme (the ruler's portrait on the obverse, to indicate the issuer, and symbolic representations on the reverse), which were known in the Early Modern period, and even more so in the 18th century.

2 E.g. in an early numismatic treatise David Jennings (*An Introduction to the Knowledge of Medals*, London 1764, p.1) gave the following definition, which fails to distinguish between coins and medals: "By Medals we understand, in general, such Pieces in the form of Coin, as were either the Current Money of the Ancients; or struck on particular occasions, and designed to preserve to posterity the portrait of some Great Person, or the memory of some Illustrious Action." Noteworthily, he limits the commemorative medallic production to portrait issues. Cf. a much later opinion in the introduction to the catalogue of medal dies preserved by the Paris Mint of Medals, compiled on the occasion of the Mint's reform under Louis Philippe in the early 1830s, the *Catalogue des poinçons, coins et médailles du Musée monétaire de la Commission des monnaies et médailles*, Paris 1833, p. vi: "Les médailles étant destinées à éterniser les faits mémorables, et à transmettre à la postérité l'effigie des hommes célèbres, il est naturel de penser que les peuples les premieres policés, furent aussi ceux qui, les premiers, employèrent les médailles, comme hommage de reconnaissance ou de respect envers les grands hommes de leur époque," and further the account of Greek and Roman coinage as medallic production.

pieces as compared to other excavated artefacts.[3] Medals as means of propaganda gained particular attention of the Revolutionary politicians in France after 1789; later Napoleon perceived medals as one the most persuasive means of the propaganda of power, and ordered the production of series of numismatic artefacts to commemorate and glorify the great deeds of his time. Until mid-19th century the medal's place within the artistic production had been mainly utilitarian, even if the designers and engravers would have frequently produced actual masterpieces of representation, style, composition, and even if the greatest masters of given periods would participate in the numismatic production. Rulers saw in the medal the ready means of eloquent propaganda: the bronze pieces could be produced in relatively large quantities at a relatively low price, and distributed among participants of ceremonies or sold to subscribers, while the luxurious gold and silver versions could be presented as valuable gifts to remind the endowed of the greatness of the issuer. The medallic production was frequently accompanied by the lower value jetons that could repeat, even if in a stylistically simplified version, the main ideas contained in the iconography of medals. These in turn often related to other means of royal self-representation: sculpture, paintings, architectural elements, heraldic symbolism, and even literary eulogies.

The association of iconographic schemes of the medals and coins, especially the ones issued by rulers, with antiquity, is clear: the basic rule that the obverse presents the issuer (in a direct or symbolic way), while the reverse conveys additional information, usually in a symbolic manner.[4] The fact that great rulers of antiquity, who would be perceived as models by modern kings and emperors, such as Alexander, Augustus, as well as their successors in the Hellenistic kingdoms and the Roman Empire, had appeared on the coin obverses, bore additional value for the appreciation of the medallic art, and the scheme, as well as the elements of ancient attire, is attested in medallic production ever since the emergence of this artistic medium in Italy in the 15th century.

It was Henry IV in the second half of the 16th century, at whose court the idea of *l'histoire métallique* was conceived, but had never been accomplished; the grandiose project had to wait until Louis XIV to see its realisation for the glorification

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[3] See e.g. the remarks of Dominique Vivant Denon, concerning the fate of the Libyan civilizations (*Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte, pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte*, Paris An X=1802, p. 14): "En general toute cette côte de l'ouest, contenant la petite et la grande Syrte de la Cyrénaïque, autrefois très habitée, qui a eu des républiques, des gouvernements particuliers , est à present une des contrées les plus oubliées de l'univers, et n'est plus rappelée à notre mémoire que par les superbes médailles qui nous en restent."

[4] In the case of the ancient coins the most common motif would be the tutelary deity of the city or ruler, but more complex representations were not unknown.

of that monarch[5]. The idea of the *histoire métallique* was to tell the story of a reign in a series of medals that would commemorate and comment by image and legend its crucial points.[6] Otherwise all over Europe medals were struck to glorify rulers, their military victories, treaties, as well as civil actions: in the 17th and 18th centuries medals were ubiquitous, even if they were rarely conceived as long series telling a consistent story, and were more frequently conceived, designed and struck *ad hoc* in order to commemorate current or past events.

Early medallic production of the French kings was in most cases hardly premeditated as a whole. Much as it abounded in masterpieces of art, the rulers rarely undertook an artistic or propagandistic programme; moreover, in the case of French medallic art before Henry IV, the images of the kings presented on medals would often be more carefully executed versions of what could be observed on coins. A vast majority of the earliest French medals (including the issue that is regarded as the very first medal struck in France, i.e. the 1450 Charles VII commemoration of the end of the Hundred Years War; Mazerolle 1[7]), would not at all present the ruler's portrait; the few exceptions (e.g. Mazerolle 5, obv. and rev. for Charles VII) feature generic images in the late gothic style. The golden age of the French Renaissance, under the rule of Francis I and his son Henry II,[8] would see not only the increasing significance ascribed to the portrait, but also the appearance and growing importance of ancient costume in medallic representations.

Rulers *à l'antique* appear on medals in two basic variants: as laureate and cuirassed busts, almost solely on the obverses, and as full figures – in a vast majority of cases on the reverses, which allowed the designers and engravers more compositional liberty. The busts rarely allow for complex symbolic meanings expressed by attributes, while the full figure representations, frequently in narrative scenes, usually convey sophisticated commentaries on how the ruler wished

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5 On the interest of Louis XIV in the art of the medal, as well as ancient numismatics, see M. Veillon, *La science des médailles antiques sous le règne de Louis XIV*, "Revue numismatique" 6/152 (1997), pp. 359–377.

6 For the analysis of the emblematic character of medals see M. Pastoureau, *La naissance de la médaille: le problème emblématique*, "Revue numismatique" 6/24 (1982), pp. 206–221; for the relationship between medal and portrait in other media see. M. Pastoureau, *La naissance de la médaille: des impasses historiographiques à la théorie de l'image*, "Revue numismatique" 6/30 (1988), pp. 227–247.

7 F. Mazerolle, *Les médailleurs français du XV*e *siècle au milieu du XVII*e, vol. 1–3, Paris 1902–04. The numbers given are the catalogue entries in vol. 2 (*Catalogue des médailles et des jetons*, Paris 1902). The engravers of the reign of Charles VII are anonymous.

8 Between these two rulers a major change occurs in the employment of engravers: while under Francis I the majority of them are Italians, under Henry II the French take lead in the medallic production. Ancient motifs abound in the later phase, in accordance with the classicist tendency already prevailing in French art. See Veillon, *Influences de l'antiquité romaine…*, pp. 30–31.

to be perceived, what traits and values were supposed to be associated with his person and authority. However, in the latter case the identification of the figure with the monarch can be at times contested: some of the images lack details of facial features that would point undoubtedly at the portrait intention.[9] Nonetheless, a number of such images on the early issues of the French kings allows for certain interpretation of the figures presented as the monarchs in the costume of ancient deities or heroes. This tendency becomes very clearly pronounced in the medallic production from the reign of Henry IV, but at least two earlier instances require attention as particularly interesting pieces of royal propaganda employing classical motifs.

Noteworthily, the earliest numismatic portraits with elements *à l'antique* appear on coins rather than on medals; testons of Francis I present a variation in which a modern armour is replaced by ancient style cuirass, modelled upon Greek and Roman *loricati* portrait statues (e.g. Duplessy 910–911[10]). However, their iconographic programme and style is mixed: the armour is ancient but other attributes, including the crown (i.e. the actual royal insignia), are modern. Similar mixed programme is present on one of the variants of Francis I medals commemorating the victory over the Swiss (with two versions of the legend: F.I. RX. FRANCO. PRI. DOM. HELVETIOR. for the modern panoply reverse, and FRANCIS. RX. FRANCOR. PMUS. DOMITOR ELVETIOR for the ancient style tropaion reverse,[11] both ca. 1515–18; BnF Médailles AV 1939 and SR 67–69 resp.): the obverse invariably presents the portrait of the king in modern out-

[9] A good example of this ambiguity among the early medals of the French kings are two numismata issued to celebrate the 1600 victory of Henry IV over the Duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel II. One of them, a medal dated to 1601, issued by the Council of the state (Mazerolle 169; engraver: Alexandre Olivier), shows on its reverse the figure of Heracles, holding the mace and the crown in his hands, and overpowering a centaur. The facial features of both adversaries are carelessly executed, but Hercules does give the impression of resemblance to the images of the king; analogies in numerous representations of Henry IV, as well as the crown as the attribute, would also point at the identification with the monarch, but the intention cannot be stated with certainty. The present author believes, against the catalogue description in Mazerolle ("au milieu d'un paysage, Hercule debout, tenant de la main droite une massue et de la gauche une couronne royale"), that this mythological hero is supposed to at least symbolically represent the king, but the rendition does not allow to call this image an allegorical portrait. The other type issued on the same occasion, a medal dated to 1602, shows the same scene, but executed much more carefully: the facial features leave no doubt that they are intended to portray both Henry IV as Hercules, and the Duke of Savoy as the vanquished centaur.

[10] J. Duplessy, *Les monnaies françaises royales de Hugues Capet à Louis XVI (987–1793), tome II (François I*er *– Louis XVI)*, Paris 1989. The numbers given are the catalogue entries.

[11] I.e. "Franciscus rex Francorum, primus domitor <H>elvetiorum" ('Francis, King of Franks, the first conqueror of the Suiss people').

fit, but the reverses vary between a *trophaion* assembled from classical elements, and one built from modern weapons. However, lifetime issues of Francis I, both monetary and medallic, do not abound in ancient motifs in the presentation of the ruler, even though, as for instance the decoration of the Fontainebleau palace shows, classical imagery played a major role in the king's personal propaganda.

The tendency to translate the symbolism of power into the language of classical allusions is testified with full force slightly later, by a medal issued by Francis' son and heir, Henry II (Mazerolle 89; engraver: Marc Bechot), which presents the new monarch in a complex attire combining the attributes of several ancient divinities: the Caduceus of Mercury, the Aegis of Jupiter and Minerva (and also Alexander the Great), the bow of Artemis or Apollo, as well as the garment that relates to the ancient costume. These are supplemented by the sword held upwards in the right hand that ought to be associated with Iustitia rather than any war deity. This medallic image corresponds closely to an illuminated vellum card preserved in the de Caylus collection, currently in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, described commonly as "François I^{er} en déité composite", and dated tentatively to ca. 1545–50 (BnF NA-255–4). The authorship, and therefore the dating of this image, has been the subject of long scholarly disputes; early literature ascribes it either to the one of the painters from the court of Francis I, Nicolas Belin de Modène (Nicoletto da Modena), Niccolò Dell'Abbate or an anonymous painter from the Fontainebleau school, and views it as a lifetime portrait, while recent studies suggest a posthumous creation on the orders of Henry II, an opinion based in the first place on the medallic analogy and on the stylistic traits that allow for the attribution of the piece to an illuminist from the circle working in mid-16th century, e.g. to the *Maître des Heures d'Henri II.*[12]

Leaving aside the question of authorship of the miniature, since the relation of the medal to an earlier piece of art is not improbable,[13] the similarity of the iconographic programme in both cases is striking. The medallic image is simplified in comparison to the miniature, which apart from the attributes listed above presents the quiver over the left shoulder (Diana or Apollo[14]), the lion's head on

[12] For the overview of bibliographic reference see B. Petey-Girard, M. Vène (eds.), *François Ier: pouvoir et image*, catalogue of the exhibition, Paris 2015, p. 62–64 [S. Lepape].

[13] See below for the legend of the engraving which seems to point at a lifetime execution.

[14] Scholarship most readily interprets the bow and quiver (in the case of Francis I) as the attributes of Diana, which in the case of the Francis I miniature is corroborated by the mention of the goddess in the accompanying poem; one should, however, consider the association with Apollo, too, as patron of arts, but also as the god to whom Henry II had been compared in poetry, for instance by Pontus de Tyard; see also E.A. Standen, *European Post-medieval Tapestries and*

the right shoulder (Hercules), the helmet on the king's head (Mars), winged boots on his feet (Mercury), and probably a fragment of a musical instrument (Apollo?). The garment is more sophisticated and more feminine than on the medal, with clearly indicated two layers, covering the legs below the knees, which led one scholar to a controversial hypothesis that the portrait combines the traits of Francis I and his sister Marguerite de Navarre.[15]

The miniature is supplemented by a poetic description which partly explains the iconographic programme, and by its grammatical form suggests lifetime creation:

Francoys en guerre est vn Mars furieux
En paix Minerue & diane a la chasse
A bien parler Mercure copieux
A bien aymer vray Amour plein de grace
O france heureuse honore donc la face
De ton grand Roy qui surpasse Nature
Car l'honorant tu sers en mesme place
Minerue Mars Diane Amour Mercure.[16]

The omission of some of the attributes in the medallic adaptation of the image seems to be dictated in the first place by the requirements of the medium and to bear no further meaning: the practice of simplification of images when transmitted onto coins had been a common practice of ancient engravers, who thus presented

Related Hangings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, vol. 2, New York 1985, pp. 247–8 for the interpretation of a series of tapestries with the story of Apollo and Diana.

[15] B. Hochstetler Meyer, *Marguerite de Navarre and the Androgynous Portrait of François Ier*, "Renaissance Quarterly" 48/2 (1995), pp. 287–325. The paper is very erudite, and proposes numerous interesting hypotheses, but lacks expertise in classical studies and classical reception (e.g. in seeing in one of the attributes just the gorgoneion, and not a very close imitation of the Aegis as it had been depicted in classical art), while its conclusion based on Platonic ideas of androgyny seems to be considerably far-fetched.

[16] Another interesting analogy for this iconography could be that thought of by Benvenuto Cellini, when he had intended to represent Francis I as Mars in one of his projects for the fountain at Fontainebleau. W.L. Hildburgh (*Benvenuto Cellini's Model for His Colossal Mars*, "The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs" 85/497 (1944), p. 200) interprets this design – with a broken lance and a scimitar as attributes – as "Mars triumphant", holding the weapons won from an enemy, but given that the figure was supposed to be accompanied by personifications of arts ("talents"), i.e. by the symbols of peace, it could have been as well a figure of the peacemaker. The model for this sculpture is not preserved, therefore it is difficult to draw any plausible conclusions concerning its relation to the representations in question, but the figurine proposed by Hildburgh is very similar in pose, even though naked, and also the helmet is of a similar shape as in the "composed deity" miniature. Further discussion of this problem falls beyond the scope of the present paper.

us for instance with significant but at the same time limited knowledge about the lost pieces of classical art. The same method was apparently employed in the case of Henry II medal, but some of the modifications require attention.

The change of the frontal/three quarters portrait (resembling the iconic portrait of Francis I by Jean Clouet) in the case of the miniature into a profile one can be ascribed to the common medallic (and generally numismatic) tendency, which over the centuries much preferred the profile to other views of the face. Moreover, the rendition of the face repeats very closely the profile portrait of Henry II known from the obverses of his medals, presenting the king in modern costume, therefore one may assume that it had been simply adapted to compliment the rest of the figure, which in turn had been taken from the image of the king's father. The intention of emphasizing the continuity of the new dynasty – both in terms of the family relations and ideological programme – may underlie this transposition of the father's allegorical portrait to the image of his son and heir.

The changes in the arrangement of the garment seem to go deeper, since even though the king's attire on the medal corresponds generally to what can be seen on its pictorial analogy (the fabric is gathered at the breast, below the Aegis, and knotted by a belt below waistline and hips), the skirt on the medal is much shorter, presenting the legs in a manner reminiscent of the armour rather than a female robe. Such arrangement can result from both the imitation of ancient figures of the Roman emperors and deities on coins, and from the wish to present the reduced silhouette as undoubtedly royal and masculine.

The most meaningful change is, however, the king's head. The Francis I miniature presents the ruler in the helmet of Mars, which corresponds with the poem and with its eulogy of the military exploits along with the civil achievements. The medal presents Henry II being crowned with a laurel wreath held by two winged figures. Their features are not very clear, but the one on the left clearly holds the palm branch as the sign of victory, while the one on the right supports the wreath with both hands and leans with one leg on the caduceus, which suggests her identification as the personification of peace.[17]

King Francis I on the miniature is an active warrior, even if he may be interpreted as a *Mars Pacificator*, who had laid his arms and turned to the care of sustaining peace and wealth of his country, which would correspond with Cellini's Fontainebleau fountain project (see note 15). The military aspect of

[17] David Potter (*Renaissance France at War: Armies, Culture and Society, C.1480–1560*, Rochester 2008, p. IX) calls them angels, which seems, however, inconsistent with the classicist iconographic programme. The *Catalogue des poinçons…*, p. 12, no. 34, says: "la Victoire et la Paix soutiennent une couronne sur la tête du roi."

the medallic image is emphasized and at the same time diminished in favour of peace and its achievements: the garment is closer to the *statuae loricatae* model, and the legend reads ET PACE ET BELLO ARMA MOVET,[18] but the king no longer wears the helmet. Instead he is being decorated with the victor's crown not only by Victory but also by Peace, which is supported by the symbol of commerce and wealth.

This issue is exceptional for the early phase of French medallic art due to its particularly complex iconographic programme and relation to another identifiable work of art, but another, from the reign of Charles IX, son and heir of Henry II, seems to be further related to its meaning, even though it is much less sophisticated in design. The medal (Mazerolle 130; engraver: Antoine Brucher) presents on its obverse a scene in which the king, dressed in the costume regarded as that of the Roman emperor (armour, *paludamentum*, high boots) is shown as rising from the chair in the form of the *sella curulis*, and supporting himself on the shoulders of two female deities, whose attributes, together with inscriptions, identify them as Pietas and Iustitia.[19] The personifications support with their free hand the oversized crown held above the king's head. The legend reads QUAS COLIT LILIA FIRMANT, making it clear that the protection of piety and justice are the pillars upon which rests the crown (*lilia*, i.e. the *fleur de lys* as the synonym of the crown.[20]) The two divinities offering the crown to the king resemble the two genii from the Henry II medal, and the iconographic programme seems to be the continuation of the image presented by the predecessor, clearly again in the effort to emphasize dynastic programme.

The reign of Henry IV, together with the new dynasty, brings a major change in the treatment of the obverse portrait, which until now had been almost exclusively modern, whether the king was portrayed in cuirass or in civil clothes.

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[18] The present author attempted at identifying the source of this legend and its possible symbolic meaning, but it had not been commented upon in either early catalogues of medals, or modern scholarship. The legend may be an indirect quotation from Virgil, *Aeneid* 12.6: "movet arma leo." Further research into archival material, which lies beyond the scope of the present paper, might reveal details of its conception and meaning.

[19] The choice and combination of these two deities has ancient provenance, and they had been often joined together both in ancient and modern times, see Cic. *Rep.* VI 16: *Iustitiam cole et* pietatem; cf. e.g. Ioannes Cochanovius*, Elegiarum libri quattuor,* Cracoviae 1584 (El IV, 3): *Et pietatem una iustitiamque colens*. The author thanks Prof. Elwira Buszewicz for pointing out the literary analogies.

[20] *Catalogue des poinçons…*, p. 12, no. 34, translates the legend as "En les cultivant il affermit sa couronne," which is far from being an exact rendition of the Latin phrase, but apparently gives the idea of its intended meaning. The exact rendition into French is: "[les déesses/vertus] que le Roi cultive , afermissent la" Fleur-de-Lys," into English: "[the deities/virtues] whom [the King] worships/cultivates, support the fleur de lys."

Henry IV introduced not only the busts *à l'antique* on a large scale, but also a variety of images. Apart from the traditional laureate head and ancient style armour (Mazerolle 267; engravers: Philippe and Philippe Danfrie) he would be portrayed in the guise of Heracles, with the lion scalp and hide worn either over the naked torso (Mazerolle 282; engravers: the Danfries), over a hardly identifiable garment (Mazerolle 623; engravers: Guillaume and Abraham Dupré), or over modern armour (quoted in Waddington 2005, see note 15, fig.2; engravers: the Danfries). In both cases the facial features of the king are rendered with remarkable realism, which stands in contrast with the idealized ancient costume, resembling in this incongruity the famous painted portrait from the school of Toussaint Dubreuil (ca. 1600), known as *Henry IV as Hercules slaying the Lernaean Hydra*. Such images would appear as early as 1590.[21]

The medallic iconography of Hercules and the hero's symbolic meaning for the self-representation of Henry IV has been discussed in detail;[22] the king had been portrayed in the guise of the hero ever since 1592, and the choice of this particular mythological figure seems to have had a number of reasons. Not the least important of these was the legend which ascribed the origins of various royal or princely houses of the ancient Gaul to Hercules, who allegedly visited the land on his journey back from the island of Geryon, located by the ancients on the Atlantic. The image of Henry IV as the "Gallic Hercules" (a hero combining the traits of Hercules and Mercury, as well as the personification of eloquence, invented by the humanists and based on a remark in Lucian[23]) permeated the royal propaganda and representation throughout his reign. It served well the double role that the monarch, like his Valois predecessors, intended to play: of the intrepid military leader and the cultural hero who propagated and supported wealth and civilization in the times of peace.

Hercules or possibly the king as Hercules, performing his mythological tasks, appears on the reverses of several numismatic types from the reign of Henry IV, issued both by the ruler himself, or by various other authorities, some of which do bear physiognomic resemblance to the king (see note 8 in the present paper),

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[21] R.B. Waddington, *Guillaume Dupré's first medal. Henri IV as Roman Hercules*, "The Medal" 47 (2005), p. 4.

[22] C. Vivanti, *Henry IV, the Gallic Hercules*, "Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes" 30 (1967), pp. 176–197; cf. M. Veillon, *L'iconographie métallique d'Hercule dans la France du seizième siècle*, "The Medal" 46 (2005), pp. 31–40.

[23] On the invention and associations with the kings before Henry IV see e.g. A. Ellenius, *Iconography, Propaganda, and Legitimation*, Oxford 1998, esp. pp. 39–40. On Louis XIII and Hercules Gallicus see C. Goldstein, *Print Culture in Early Modern France: Abraham Bosse and the Purposes of Print*, Cambridge 2012, pp. 111–112.

but since their imagery is related to the works of Hercules and does not propose novel arrangements or interpretations, they will not be discussed in detail here.

A special place in the medallic production of Henry IV must be granted to the luxurious issue presenting the royal family: the king, the queen Marie de' Medici, and the little *dauphin*, the future Louis XIII (Mazerolle 639 and 643; 1603 and 1605 resp.; engraver: Guillaume Dupré). The king Henry is presented here in the relatively simple outfit of the type of the Roman emperor (armour and *chlamys* mantle, no helmet), combined with the Lysippean type of Alexander with the lance, which associates him with the god Mars. More complex symbolism is applied to the queen and the crown prince.

Marie de' Medici is presented in the guise of Minerva (a prominent goddess in the pictorial cycle commissioned by the widowed queen regent from P.P. Rubens in the early 1620s in order to glorify her own deeds; a series much in the same vein as the idea of the *histoire métallique*), with the helmet, the Aegis and the shield on the left arm. The child supports his leg on a dolphin, which is a clear iconographic allusion to his formal royal title; he, however, is also portrayed holding the oversized helmet under his arm – the very helmet that is missing from his father's head. This iconographic arrangement repeats or alludes to the Hellenistic and Roman type of Eros/Cupid playing with the helmet of Mars (which in itself relates to the motif of war disarmed), and when combined with the dolphin it adds to the interpretation of the Marie de' Medici figure: apart from being Minerva, she must also be associated with Venus, both as the lover of Mars, and the mother of Amor. The composition of the dolphin at her feet is reminiscent of the Venus Marina types, which strengthens the association. Moreover, the whole scene, when all the iconographic elements are taken into consideration, forms a prophetic message for the prospective generations, personified by the infant prince present at his parents' feet: from the union of Mars and Venus the family of the Julii was born, whose emulation had been a clear ambition of the first Bourbon king.[24]

The union of Mars and Minerva, as well as of Mars and Venus, is symbolised additionally by the joining of the hands in the sign of concord, known from Roman imperial coinage; the imperial eagle hovers over the family, holding the

[24] Among the medals relatives to Marie de' Medici and the *dauphin* one issue should draw our attention: the 1601 medal presenting the Thetis bathing her infant son in the waters of the river Styx (Mazerolle 791; anonymous engraver). The present author does not concur with Marie Veillon's (*Un portrait du roi. Le portrait en médaille dans la France du sizième siècle*, "The Medal" 48 (2006), p. 19) opinion that the image represents the queen as "autre Thétis": the medals seems to belong to the non-portrait class, even if the intention of comparing the newly born prince to Achilles is made clear by the choice of subject.

crown in a similar way to the presentation of this insignia by peace and justice or victory in the earlier types of Henry II and Charles IX. It is hard to assess with certainty to which extent the first Bourbon king intended to link his propaganda with that of the former dynasty, but since such approach would serve legitimacy and continuity of power, this iconographic element can purposefully relate to earlier imagery.

Another particularly interesting type of Henri IV is a very highly artistic medal, whose both sides make allusions to classical themes (Mazerolle 725–728, with variants; attributed to the engraver N. Guinier), presenting the king in the guise of the god Mars. The obverse features the portrait with the face in profile, while the rest of the body (shown down to the shoulders) is captured from behind; this compositional pattern being known from several ancient engraved gems with the images of Hellenistic kings in the first place.[25] Both the armour and the helmet are very richly decorated; the plummeted helmet is additionally mounted by a lying sphinx. The only modern elements in this portrait are the typical realistic profile of Henry IV and the mantle in the form of the *paludamentum* but with the *fleur de lys* ornament. The legend accompanying the portrait, ALCIDES HIC NOVVS ORBI, is a clear, even if erudite, declaration of the king's identification with Hercules.

The reverse shows a scene *à l'antique*: the king, again in the guise of Mars, in this case naked, with the exception of the helmet (of different type than the one on the obverse), is fighting a centaur (a symbolic representation of Charles Emanuel, the duke of Savoy), in order to seize the crown held by the monster in his hand. The scene is arranged with dynamism unknown from the earlier royal medals, and employs with great liberty the idealized way of presenting the human body, in the manner that by modern classicizing artistic movements was perceived and labelled "heroic nudity",[26] not mitigated in this case even by such common element as the mantle. The rendering of the face could suggest

[25] The search for possible iconographic sources and analogies would require further archival research for the models known in the period. The most prominent of these engraved gems, interpreted as Perseus, the last king of Macedonia (M.-L. Vollenweider, *Camées et intailles, tome I: Les portraits grecs du Cabinet des médailles. Catalogue raisonné*, vol. 1–2, Paris 1985, cat. 201), which shows compositional and stylistic similarities with the medal in question, is attested in the collections of the Cabinet des Médailles only as late as 1802, but the fact that it had been mounted in a Renaissance frame points at its much longer collection history.

[26] The term had been recently contested among others by Tonio Hölscher (*Griechische Historienbilder des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Würzburg 1973, *passim*), based on the analysis of the meaning of nudity in Greek art of the classical and late classical periods, and a less specific term "ideal nudity" was proposed, but the period in question, and later centuries, associated classical nudity with heroism.

a generic image, but the facial features visible above the raised hand that covers the lower part of the face show considerable resemblance to the king's portraits. One must, however, bear in mind that this representation goes against the kings mixed style imagery encountered in paintings, engravings and on other medals, and complete nakedness had not been a mode in which a modern person would be commonly portrayed. The image is supplemented by the legend MARTIS CEDUNT HAEC SIGNA PLANETAE, identifying the king with the god of war.

The last medal that should be mentioned in this context belongs to the early years of the reign of the successor of Henry IV, his son and heir Louis XIII (possibly from the period of Marie de' Medici regency). It shows on the obverse the laureate bust of the young monarch in ancient style armour with the scaled Aegis and gorgoneion, and with *chlamys* or *paludamentum* decorated with the order of the Holy Spirit. The youthful face and the type of attire evoke Alexander the Great rather than the Roman emperors. This issue is a clear continuation of the relatively complex portraits of Henry IV on the obverses of his medals, but it also employs the type of armour that had been known from the type of Henry II and the miniature of Francis I, i.e. the Aegis of Minerva or Alexander. This element will be repeated, with the substitution of the gorgoneion by the radiate solar disk, on the medals of Louis XIV. As far as composition or ideological content is concerned, this medal does not add much to the general royal image in this medium, but the idealization of facial features is a novel trait in French medallic art, which will continue in the following centuries.

The idealized portrait *à l'antique*, or in the mixed style combining classical and modern motifs, would flourish under Louis XIV and persevere until the First Empire, in accordance with the predominance of classicist tendencies in French art. Louis XIV and especially later Napoleon would employ this style abundantly, even if beside modern portrayals, in their medallic production, and would ascribe to it complex programmes, both iconographic and ideological. The early phase of French medallic art provides us with fewer consistent programmes in the exploitation of classical themes by the medal designers and engravers than the later periods, nevertheless, it also sees some of the most sophisticated projects, like the combined attributes of Henry II or the far from simplistic imagery and symbolism of Hercules in the iconography of Henry IV.

The portraits in the ancient manner were not the only way in which the classical themes were employed by medallic art in the service of royal propaganda: many ideas were conveyed by varied imagery of the reverses, which only rarely showed the rulers, and more frequently complimented the obverse portrait with symbols detached from the physical figure of the monarchs, eloquent, however, about their self-representational intentions. This repertoire included the deities

and personifications as well as attributes, whose language was easily conceivable in the period of classical and humanist education.[27] Another means of including classical allusions and comparisons of the kings to ancient personages were the legends, which could point very directly at the desired models, as is shown by the case of the Alexander the Great legends on the medals of Henry III.[28]

It was Henry IV who as the first French king fully comprehended the power of the medals as the means of propaganda and linked the medallic imagery with other demonstrations of his power; his own imagery in paintings, sculpture and medals, as well as the design of e.g. the "royal entries" into cities, were subjected to the most important association which the king propagated: with the Gallic Hercules, the hero-god, who by adopting the traits of Hercules and Mercury, was a perfect allegorical figure of a ruler, whose glory should relate to both military actions and the cultivation of peace. The consistence in the creation of the royal image makes one wonder, had the *histoire métallique* of this monarch been accomplished, how great would be the role ascribed to Hercules in its iconographic programme.

The survey of early medallic production shows that the classical imagery had permeated royal iconography and propaganda as early as during the reign of Francis I, and its relatively slow development led to its full flourish in the 17th century. The observable relations between the imagery of several issues, the repetitive elements and compositional patterns, give evidence of the increasing consciousness of both dynastic continuity and the artistic expression, as well as of a growing tendency to associate the rulers with great heroes of the past, whether historical personages or mythological figures – who anyway in some cases would merge into the general complex image combining the traits and attributes of various characters. The medallic art is by the virtue of the medium one of iconographic epitome and the language of classical antiquity provided it with well comprehensible symbols that expressed the ideas and values promoted by the rulers, hence its increasing popularity in the artistic medium that itself had been so closely associated with the classical cultures and imagery of power.

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[27] Such classical elements appear very early in the French medallic production, as is attested by the technically and stylistically coin-like medal of Louis XI, dated to ca. 1465, featuring on its reverse the seated Concordia (described by the legend as CONCORDIA AUGUSTA), based very closely on analogical representations of various personifications on Roman imperial coins. See M. Veillon, *Genèse et essor de la médaille royale dans la France*, "The Medal" 50 (2007), p. 17.

[28] See Veillon, *Influences de l'antiquité romaine…*, p. 37. The article gives examples of other uses of ancient motifs as well.

Medallic Portraits *à l'antique* of the French Kings before Louis XIV
Summary

The early medallic production of French Kings was hardly systematic: it was not until the reign of Henry IV that the idea of *histoire métallique* took shape, and even then it was not fully realized. However, even the early medals provide us with interesting examples of a well-premeditated programme and a propagandistic dimension. One of the focal tendencies in the public image of the Renaissance kings was the adaptation of classical motifs and their inclusion into royal iconography. The paper analyses the classical elements present on the portrait medals of the French rulers before Louis XIV, their meanings, ancient analogies and sources.

Keywords: medallic portrait, classical reception, Renaissance France, imagery of power